

## STERILIZATION OF THE FEEBLE MINDED\*

BY HON. H. A. BRUCE, M.D., F.R.C.S.(ENG.),

*Lieut.-Governor of Ontario,**Toronto*

As long ago as 1907, Lord Grey, who was then our Governor-General, stated that "The tendency of the addresses delivered to Canadian Clubs will be to uplift the people out of the valley in which they dwell onto the mountain tops whence their gaze will extend over a wider horizon—to enrich our life by keeping before us high ideals and the well-being of the state." At this very time, as in 1907, the best minds in the world are seeking solution for a grave economic problem which is causing widespread distress. Economic problems seem to be recurrent and at intervals menace the well-being of the state. But there are other problems of at least equal importance that continuously threaten our welfare and I, who am not an economist, have chosen to speak to you this evening about one of the most terrifying of these. It is race degeneration.

That we may all at once realize the importance of the subject, let me begin by quoting from an article entitled "Insanity, the Modern Menace" by Henry Martin Robinson: "If the present rate of increase in mental cases continues for the next three-quarters of a century, half the population of the United States will be in insane asylums and the other half will labour solely to support them." Life and thought here in Canada are much the same as in the United States and if that dire prediction is a sound one, as it seems to be, we cannot expect a happier outcome in our own country unless action is taken to defeat the disintegrating forces which are now at work unhindered.

The medical profession brings us into close, and, I might say, intimate contact with mental defectives, mental diseases of all kinds, and the moral perversions which form such dark blots on the pages of every nation's history. We see the horror, the sorrow which neither word nor act can banish, the physical and mental torment, the grim tragedies which engulf whole

families in despair and often ruin. For it is to be remembered that the unfortunate individuals of whom I speak are not *alone*. They have families and friends on whom falls the weight of their suffering.

Since speaking upon this subject a few weeks ago I have received countless letters urging me to engage in a campaign for its control. Many sad cases have been brought to my attention; I shall give you but one. A normal, educated man married a wife of normal intelligence. A son was born, but he made no attempt to speak until he was four. He is now 27 and physically perfect. But he has the intelligence of a boy of four. You can doubtless imagine the quite indescribable mental anguish of his parents. All these years they have been attempting to instruct and bring up this imbecile boy. They love him—their only child. The father, when he brought the boy to see me recently, told me with tears streaming from his eyes that he and his wife had gone through unendurable purgatory for more than twenty years, and that they had reached the very limits of human endurance. They sent the boy to an institution. However, the poor imbecile fretted; the mother, motherlike, worried. She neither slept nor ate until her imbecile boy was restored to her. The father's aunt was insane. The germ of the evil of which I am speaking was there. The father heartrendingly deplored the inescapable fact that the law had not required him to be sterilized, thus preventing all this misery.

All the medical science in the world stands helpless before the mental bankruptcy and moral degeneracy of one idiot. And if that poor unfortunate idiot be allowed to propagate, what, then, becomes of our race,

We, in the medical profession, can deal effectively with most forms of disease; can cure a great number of the ills to which flesh is heir. But, notwithstanding, we are devoting a great deal of time and research to the prevention of

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these diseases so many of which are curable. How much more important it is then for all of us, scientists and laymen, to cooperate in an earnest effort to prevent what by no human means can ever be cured!

In order to illustrate the hereditary nature of mental defects and diseases—the inviolable law of nature that *like begets like*—I shall mention two well-known historic records of the workings of the law of heredity.

First let us look at the bright side of the picture. For it is only by contrast—only by seeing what *can be* against the dark background of *what is* that we shall recognize the imperative necessity of putting an end to this malignant growth which threatens the very life of the race. Let us see for a moment how a legacy of good blood or good germ cells may enrich a nation.

Elizabeth Tuthill, a woman of splendid qualities lived nearly two hundred years ago at Hartford, Connecticut. She married Richard E. Edwards, a great lawyer. They had one son and four daughters. That union has left its mark upon American blood. And when anything marks a nation's blood, it marks for weal or woe its ideals, its institutions and its history. Later in life this same Richard Edwards married an ordinary, commonplace woman. She had ordinary, commonplace children. The splendid heredity of Richard Edwards was swamped by the mating. But the union of two streams of fine blood of similar characters begets greater. The son of the *first* marriage was Timothy Edwards, one of the founders of Yale University. He was the father of Jonathan Edwards, who also married a wonderful woman, Sarah Pierpont. From that union have descended 12 college presidents, 265 college graduates, 65 college professors, 60 physicians, 100 clergymen, 75 army officers, 60 prominent authors, 100 lawyers, 30 judges, 80 public officers—state governors, city mayors and state officials—3 congressmen, 2 United States senators and 1 vice-president of the United States. Nor is that all. The direct descendants of this Jonathan Edwards include: Aaron Burr, who was Vice-President; Mrs. Eli Whitney, wife of the inventor of the cotton gin, and the novelist, Winston Churchill. The oldest daughter was Abigail. Perhaps the most notable descendant was Robert Treat Paine, one of the signers of the Declaration of Indepen-

dence. Then there was Elizabeth, the next daughter, whose descendants include the Marchioness of Donegal, a distinguished woman of Ireland; and the Fairbanks brothers who manufacture weighing scales known all over the world. The next daughter, Mabel, gave the world Melville W. Bigelow, one of the greatest legal writers of our time and Morrison R. Waite, former chief justice of the United States. The glorious story of fine blood seems unending. Other notable descendants are Bishop Vincent, founder of the Chautauqua movement and father of George Vincent, head of the Rockefeller Foundation; Grover Cleveland, Ulysses S. Grant and Edith Carow, widow of Theodore Roosevelt and mother of his five sons, one of whom was killed in the air service in France. The remaining four are starting upon careers of honour and distinction. And so this splendid history of great blood continues invigorating, healthful, making its incalculable contribution to all that is best and noblest in the life of any nation. I am not surprised that many of the descendants of Elizabeth Tuthill—and they are to be found all over America—wear as a sign of distinction “The Tuthill Emblem”—a golden badge of honour. Honour, indeed—they are honoured, the nation is honoured, by such blood as that of the Tuthills.

Now for the contrast. We plunge immediately and headlong from national glory to national shame. Two hundred years ago there lived in New England a vagabond named Max Juke. The melancholy story of the descendants of this degenerate can soon be told. One thousand two hundred and twenty of these social scourges have been traced. Now you can watch the blood stream of a nation being polluted past all remedy. Of the descendants of Max Juke 300 died in infancy, 310 were professional paupers, 440 were wrecked by disease, 50 were prostitutes, 60 were thieves, 7 were murderers, 53 were criminals of some other kind. Many were habitual drunkards addicted to every form of vice and depravity.

In the face of the social menace of the Max Jukes of our nation, it would appear but the simplest form of commonsense—the only way indeed to save a race of fine people—to insist, as 27 out of the 48 States of the United States of America have insisted between 1907 and 1931, that mental deficient shall be compulsorily sterilized. Of all the unfortunate victims

who fill the mental hospitals of the United States no less than 50 per cent are the offspring of mental defectives. They, and all those across whose lives their pathetic condition falls like an ominous shadow, are but reaping the inevitable punishment, the horror of allowing to continue what should be immediately stamped out. By sheer weight of numbers the mentally deficient—the most prolific of all mankind—constitute such a threat to the well-being of the state as to imperil its very existence. Let it not be thought that I exaggerate. I have already referred to the dire prophecy that 75 years from now half of the population may be working to support the other and imbecile half. Leaving for a moment the medical or racial point of view and regarding it as an economist, the family of Max Juke, whose scandalous record I have already mentioned, cost the state \$1,300,000 in 75 years. How, indeed, is it possible to place too great emphasis upon a social evil which cries aloud for remedy.

I have intentionally directed your thought to this menace as it exists in the United States in order that we may recognize, in all its evil potentialities, that same menace of racial degeneration within our own borders. What of Canada? What of Ontario? I shall bring to your attention certain definite facts and quote a few statistics. I wish to present a picture of conditions in Ontario, which I hope will remain continually in your minds until an enlightened public opinion demands legislation to curb this evil. At present Ontario spends \$4,000,000 annually to maintain hospitals for the insane. But the "Max Jukes" of this Province go their way unchecked and unrestrained. Like begets like, and so they propagate their kind at a rate which requires that every 20 months a new asylum be built at a cost of \$2,000,000 and with an annual maintenance charge of \$300,000. At the present rate of increase in mental defectives, we shall within 25 years be spending \$8,000,000 annually in this Province for their maintenance and we shall have twice as many institutions as we have now devoted to their care. In the mental hospital at Orillia there are several groups of half a dozen—each group *from the same family*. You can in imagination trace the course of such unchecked propagation. The seeds of deficiency are transmitted from generation to

generation continuously affecting an increasing number of unfortunates and imposing upon the shoulders of the mentally and physically fit a heavier burden, which, by its economic weight, discourages them from raising large families. Devastating as a forest fire, and all the more terrible that it rages unseen and undetected in our midst, race degeneration takes its insidious toll here as everywhere else.

I cannot but feel that this is allowed to continue rather through ignorance than indifference. I feel sure that public opinion, once aware of the magnitude of this menace, will not be satisfied with less than thoroughly effective measures to make it in the course of time only a shameful memory, like the dungeons and torture chambers of the past. Between 1871 and 1931 our population little more than doubled, but the number of insane in our institutions multiplied sixfold and the cost of caring for them increased tenfold. I repeat the distressing figures—twice as many people, six times as many insane, ten times as heavy a burden of cost. Perhaps reference to one family history is all that is necessary to impress upon you the seriousness of the economic aspect of the problem. An immigrant tainted with mental deficiency entered this country. He, his son and two daughters and seven illegitimate offspring in the third generation are at this time costing a municipality \$3,460.00 annually for support and care. Records have been kept of one Canadian family which has provided inmates for mental hospitals at New Westminster, London, Hamilton and Orillia. Of the four known branches, three are for the most part mentally defective. Ten Mongolian idiots have appeared in this family and twelve of its adult members were maniacs. Many other family histories could be cited; but why spend more time in the melancholy past and present? Our concern should be action that will mitigate this scourge in the future.

The remedy, the recourse which can save us from the horrors incidental to a continued spread of deficiency, is sterilization for individuals contemplating marriage when there exists the taint of insanity, mental deficiency or epilepsy in the family history. Such individuals should be subjected to thorough psychiatric examinations and sterilization advised if the dangers for their progeny seem great. It

is, above all, desirable that we look to the possibility of social legislation which will prevent the marriage of mental defectives unless first of all they be sterilized.

Not only would sterilization curtail the increasing demand for hospital accommodation for defectives, but it would permit of a restricted class of these defectives, who must now be confined, being allowed at large in the community. Thus it would relieve the pressure on public institutions. It would relieve the pressure on our penal institutions too. For, as Mr. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes of the United States Supreme Court said *when upholding the Virginia Sterilization law*; "It is better for all the world if, instead of waiting to execute sentence upon degenerate offspring for crime, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind." The case of *Buck v. Bell*, decided on May 2, 1927, has definitely committed the United States to a policy of human sterilization as a means of coping with the socially undesirable in their midst. Sterilization promotes both the health of the patient and the welfare of society. It is in no sense a punitive measure. It is protection to the individual, to the state and to posterity. It has no ill effects upon the individual. On the contrary, it results in a better physical and mental condition. In the State of California a law permitting sterilization was adopted in 1909. Investigation has disclosed no serious complaints from the thousands of persons who were treated. Here in Hamilton are some far-sighted people who have been doing splendid work in connection with this subject, though handicapped by the lack of supporting legislation. However, they are courageously creating the public opinion which necessarily precedes the enactment of such measures. Mr. Kaufman, of Kitchener, has established a clinic in his city to deal with this condition in a practical way and he, as well as your local organization, is making a valuable contribution to the welfare of the race.

May the day speedily come when Ontario will awake, as Alberta and British Columbia have awakened, and as 27 States in the American Union have awakened, to the enormity of this peril and the necessity for prompt action. Alberta and British Columbia and 27 American States have adopted legislation permitting the sterilization of mental defectives. They realize, as I hope Ontario also will realize, that whereas material wealth can be replaced by man God's

wealth of heredity stored in the germ cells if once lost can never, never be recovered.

I have said on a previous occasion, and I shall always be of the opinion, that moral and religious sense necessarily revolt against the destruction of human life at any stage. But sterilization contemplates no destruction of life. On the contrary, sterilization means the ennoblement of life by damming up the foul streams of degeneracy and demoralization which are pouring pollution into the nation's life blood. No reasonable man would countenance a diphtheria carrier going about communicating disease to many of those with whom he comes in contact. Yet the disease the diphtheria carrier transmits is curable and is incidental only to the immediate period of a few weeks during which it runs its course. But the infection transmitted by mental defectives is incurable. Its victims are the unborn generations. Its potency for misery and for suffering is great beyond all powers of description.

Sterilization of the unfit is not open to objection on the ground that it comprehends race suicide. On the contrary, it is the antithesis of race suicide; for what could be more suicidal, what more destructive to any race than to permit degeneracy to increase at its present rate? It is indeed suicidal for a race, a nation or a province to cast its germ cells, its precious jewels of heredity, into the oblivious, bottomless sea of mental, moral and physical degradation. Let us pause for a moment and in a spirit not of intrusion but of sorrow and pity gaze into a home—there are many such hopeless homes in this country—where feeble-minded parents are being left to care for their young. You will never forget this sight. Terrible is the plight of these parents and their children, but even more shocking is the apathy of public opinion which has permitted them to reproduce their suffering, yet menacing, kind. Ontario is well to the fore in many forms of social legislation. I am sure that with a full understanding of the problem of race degeneration public opinion will not hesitate to demand action designed to relieve existing conditions and to crush the menace which the future holds in store. In this Canadian Club and in other Canadian Clubs throughout Canada may leadership be given to such thought. Then the proud record of forty years will be crowned by still another distinguished contribution to the common welfare.